THE

Merry Tales

OF

The WISE MEN

OF

Gotham.

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THE

MERRY TALES

OF THE

WISE MEN OF GOTHAM.

TALE I.

THERE were two men of Gotham, and one of them was going to Nottingham market to buy sheep, and both met together on Nottingham bridge. Well met, said one to the other, whither are you going? said he that came from Nottingham. Marry, said he that was going thither, I am going to the market to buy sheep. Buy sheep! said the other, which way will you bring them home? Marry, said the other, I will bring them over this bridge. By Robin, said he that came from Nottingham, but thou shalt not. By my forgery, said the other, but I shall not, said the one; the other. Then they began one against the other,

hen againſt the ground, as if a hun-
red ſheep had been between them.
Hold there, ſaid the one. Beware of
ny ſheep leaping over the bridge, ſaid
he other. I care not, ſaid the one.
They ſhall all come this way, ſaid the
ther. They ſhall not, ſaid the one.
Then ſaid the other, if thou make
uch ado, I will put my finger in
ly mouth. A turd thou wilt, ſaid
he other. And as they were contend-
ng another wiſe man belonging to
Gotham came from the market with
ſack of meal on his horſe; & ſee-
ng his neighbours at ſtrife about
heep, and none betwixt them, ſaid
h! fools will you never learn wit!
hen help me, continued he, to lay
his ſack upon my ſhoulder; they
d ſo and he went to the ſide of the
ridge and ſhook the meal into the
ver, ſaying, How much meal
there in my ſack? Many
one. Then replied this
n ſo much wit is there

heads to ſtrive for that you have not. Now which was the wiſeſt of theſe three? I leave you to judge.

TALE II.

There was a man of Gotham that rode to the market with two buſhels of wheat, and becauſe his horſe ſhould not be damaged by carrying too great a burden, he was determined to carry the corn himſelf upon his own neck and ſtill kept riding upon his horſe till he arrived at the end of his journey. Now I will leave you to judge which was the wiſeſt, his horſe or himſelf.

TALE III.

On a time the men of Gotham fain would have pinn'd in the cuckow that ſhe might ſing all the year; and in the midſt of the town they had a hedge made round in compaſs, and a cuckow and put her into it, & here, and you ſhall neither or drink all the year. The hen ſhe perceived herſelf

encompaſſed within the hedge, flew away. A vengeance on her, ſaid theſe wiſe men, we did not make our hedge high enough.

TALE IV.

There was a man of Gotham who went to Nottingham market to ſell cheeſe; and going down the hill to Nottingham bridge, one of his chees-es fell out of his wallet, & ran down the hill. Whereſon, ſaid the fellow, what, can you run to the market a-one? I'll now ſend one after another Then laying his wallet down, taking out the cheeſes, he tumbled them down the hill, one after another. ome ran into one buſh & ſome in-o another. However he charged them o meet him at the market place. The an went to the market to meet with he cheeſes, and ſtay'd till the mar-et was almoſt over, then went and nquired at his neighbours if they aw his cheeſes come to the market? Why, who ſhould bring them? ſays

one; Marry, themſelves, ſaid the fellow, they knew the way very well. A vengeance on them they ran ſo faſt I was afraid they would run beyond the market; I am perſuaded they are by this time almoſt as far as York. So he immediately rode to York, but was very much diſappointed. And to add to it, he never found nor heard of one of his cheeſes.

TALE V.

A man of Gotham bought at Nottingham market, a trevet, or barn iron; and going home with it, his ſhoulders grew weary with the carriage. He ſet it down, and ſeeing it had 3 feet, ſaid, Whoreſon, thou haſt three feet and I but two, thou ſhalt bear me home if thou wilt; ſo ſet himſelf down upon it, and ſaid, bear me as long as I have done thee, for if thou doſt not, thou ſhalt ſtand ſtill for me. The man of Gotham ſeeing his trevet would not move, ſtand ſtill, ſaid he, in the Mayor's name, and

follow me if thou wilt and I can shew you the right way. When he went home, his wife asked where the trevet was? He said, it had three legs, and he had but two, and he had taught him the ready way to his house therefore he might come himself, if he would. Where did you leave the trevet? said the woman. At Gotham bridge, said he. So she immediately ran and fetched the trevet herself, or otherwise she must certainly have lost it, on account of her husband's want of wit.

TALE VI.

A certain smith of Gotham had a large wasp's nest in the straw at the end of his forge, and there coming one of his neighbours to have his horse shod, and the wasps being exceeding busy, the man was stung by one of them. The man being grievously affronted, said, are you worthy to keep a forge or not, to have men stung with these wasps? O neighbour

ſaid the ſmith, be content and I wil
put them from their neſt preſently
Immediately he took a coulter, an
heated it red hot, and thruſt it int
the ſtraw at the end of his forge, an
ſet it on fire, and burnt it up. The
ſaid the ſmith I told thee I'd fire them
out of their neſt.

TALE VII.

On Good Friday the men of Goth-
am conſulted together what to d
with their herrings, ſprats, and ſal
fiſh, and agreed that all ſuch fiſh
ſhould be caſt into the pond or pool
in the midſt of the town, that the
number of them might increaſe the
next year. Therefore every one that
had any fiſh left, caſt them immedi-
ately into the pond. Then ſaid one,
I have gotten left ſo many red her-
rings; Well, ſaid another, and I have
left ſo many whitings. Another im-
mediately cried out I have as yet
gotten ſo many ſprats left. And ſaid
the laſt, I have gotten ſo many ſalt

iſhes, let them go together in the great pond without any diſtinction. nd we may be ſure to fare like lords he next year. At the beginning of he next Lent they immediately went bout drawing the pond, imagining hey ſhould have the fiſh, but were nuch ſurpriſed to find nothing but a great eel! Ah! ſaid they, a miſchief on this eel, for he hath eaten up our fiſh. What muſt we do with him? ſaid one to the other. Kill him, ſaid one, chop him in pieces ſaid another. Nay, not ſo, ſaid the other, but let us drown him. Be it accordingly ſo, replied they all; So they immediately went to another pond, and caſt the eel into the water. Lie there, ſaid theſe wiſe men, and ſhift for thyſelf, ſince you may not expect any help from us. So they left the eel to be drowned.

TALE VIII.

On a time the men of Gotham had forgotten to pay their rents to their

landlord; so one said to the other to morrow must be pay day, by whom can we send our money to our landlord? So one said to them, I have this day catched a hare, and he may carry it, for he is very quick footed; be it so replied the rest; he shall have a letter and a large purse to put our money in, and we can direct her the ready way. When the letter was written and the money put into a purse, they immediately tied them about the hare's neck, saying, You must first go to Loughborough, and then to Leicester, and at Newark is our landlord, then commend us to him, and there is his due. The hare as soon as she got out of their hands, ran a quite contrary way. Some said thou must first go to Loughborough; others said let the hare alone, for she can tell a nearer way than any of us: let her go.

TALE IX.

A man of Gotham that went mowing in the meadow, found a large

grafshopper. He immediately threw down his fcythe, & ran home to his neighbours, and faid that the devil was there in the field, and was hopping amongft the grafs, then was every man ready with their clubs and ftaves, halberts, and other weapons to kill the grafshopper. When they came almoft to the place where the grafshopper was, faid one to the other let every man crofs himfelf from the devil, & we will not meddle with him fo they returned again, and faid, we were bleft this day that we went no farther. O ye cowards, faid he that left his fcythe in the meadow, help me to fetch my fcythe; No, anfwered they, it is good to fleep in a whole fkin; it is much better for thee to lofe thy fcythe, than to marr us all.

TALE X.

On a time there were twelve men of Gotham, that went to fifh; and fome waded in the water, and fome ftood on dry land. And in going

home, one said to the other, we have ventured wonderfully in wading, I pray God that none of us did come from home to be drowned. Nay marry said one to the other, let us see that for their did twelve of us come out. Then they told themselves and every one told eleven. Said the one to the other, there is one of us drowned. They went back to the brook where they had been fishing, and sought up and down for him that was drowned making great lamentation. A courtier coming by asked what it was they sought for, and why they were so sorrowful? Oh! said they, this day we went to fish in the brook; 12 of us came out together, and one is drowned. Said the courtier, tell how many there be of you One of them said eleven; but he did not tell himself. Well, said the courtier, what will you give me, and I will find the twelfth man? Sir, said they, all the money we have got. Give me the

money, said he; he then began with the first, and gave him a stroke over the shoulders with his whip, which made him groan; saying here is one, and so he served them all, and they groaned at the matter. When he came to the last he paid him well, saying here is the twelfth man; God's blessings on thy heart, said they, for finding our brother.

TALE XI.

A man of Gotham riding along the highway, saw a cheese, so drew his sword and pricked it with the point, in order to pick it up. Another man came by, alighted and picked it up, and rode away with it. The man of Gotham rides back to Nottingham to buy a long sword to pick up the cheese & returning to the place where it did lye, he pulled out his sword pricking the ground, and said, If I had had this sword I should have had the cheese myself, but now another has got it.

TALE XII.

A man in Gotham that did not love his wife, & she having fair hair, her husband said divers times he would cut it off, but durst not do it when she was awake so he resolved to do it when she was asleep; therefore one night he took a pair of sheers and put them under his pillow; which his wife perceiving, said to one of the maids to go to bed to my husband for he intends to cut off my hair to-night let him cut off thy hair, and I will give thee as good a kirtle as ever thou didst see. The maid did so, & feigned herself asleep, which the man perceiving, cut off the maid's hair, and wrapped it about the sheers, & laid them under the pillow, and went to sleep; the maid arose, and the wife took the hair and sheers, and went to the hall, and there burnt the hair. The man had a fine horse that he loved much, and the goodwife went into the stable, cut off the horse's tail

wrapped the sheers up in it, and laid them under the pillow again. Her husband seeing her combing her hair in the morning marvelled very much thereat. The girl seeing her master in a deep study, said, What the devil ails the horse in the stable, he bleeds prodigiously. The man ran into the stable, and found the horses tail was cut off: then going to his bed, he found the sheers wrapped up in his horses tail. He then went to his wife saying, I crave thy mercy for I intended to cut of thy hair, but have cut off my own horse's tail. Yea said she self-do, self have Many men think to do a bad turn. but it turneth oft-times to themselves.

TALE XIII.

A man of Gotham laid his wife a wager that she could not make him a cuckold. No! said she, but I can. Do not spare me said he, do what you can. On a time she had hid all the piggots and faufets, and going into

the buttery, ſet a barrel a broach, & cry'd to her ſpouſe, Pray bring me a ſpigget and faufet, or elſe the ale will all run out. He ſought up and down but could not find one; Come here then, ſays ſhe, and put thy finger in the tap hole. Then ſhe called a taylor with whom ſhe made a bargain. Soon after ſhe came to her huſband, and brought a ſpiggot and faufet, ſaying, Pull thy finger out of the tap hole, good cuckold. Beſhrew thy heart for your trouble ſaid he, make no ſuch bargain with me again.

TALE XIV.

A man of Gotham took a young buzzard, and invited four or five gentlemens ſervants to the eating it; but the wife killed an old gooſe, and ſhe and two of her goſſips ate up the buzzard, and the old gooſe was laid to the fire for the gentlemens ſervants; ſo when they came the gooſe was ſet before them. What is this? ſaid one of them; the goodman ſaid,

a curious buzzard. A buzzard! ſaid they, why 'tis an old gooſe, & thou art a knave to mock us, and ſo in great anger departed home. The fellow was very ſorry that he had affronted them, ſo took a bag and put the buzzard's feathers in it; but his wife deſired him before he went, to fetch a block of wood, and in the interim ſhe pulled out the buzzard's feathers and put in the gooſe's. Then the man taking the bag, went to the gentlemen's ſervants and ſaid, Pray be not angry with me, you ſhall ſee I had a buzzard, for here be the feathers. Then he opened the bag, and took out the gooſe's feathers. Upon which one of them took a cudgel, and gave him a dozen of ſtripes, ſaying, You knave could ye not be content to mock us at home? but are ye come here to mock us alſo.

TALE XV.

A man's wife of Gotham was bro't to bed of a male child, and the father

invited the goſſips, which were children of eight or ten years of age. The eldeſt child's name was Gilbert, the ſecond's name was Humphrey, and the godmother's name was Chriſtibel. Their relations admoniſhed them divers times, that they muſt all ſay after the Parſon. And when they were all come to the church, the Prieſt ſaid be you all agreed of the name? Gilbert, Humphrey, and Chriſtibel, ſaid the ſame. The Prieſt then ſaid Wherefore came you hither? They immediately ſaid the ſame The Prieſt being amazed, could not tell what to ſay, ſo whiſtled and ſaid, Whey, and ſo did they. The Prieſt being angry, ſaid, Go home fools go home; then Gilbert, Humphrey, and Chriſtibel did the ſame. The Prieſt then provided god-fathers and godmothers himſelf.

TALE XVI.

A young man of Gotham went a wooing to a fair maid; his mother

warned him before-hand, saying whenever you look at her, cast a sheep's eye at her, and say, How dost thou my sweet Pigsnie? The fellow went to a butcher's & bought seven or eight sheep's eyes. And when this lusty wooer was at dinner, he would look upon this fair wench, and cast in her face a sheep's eye, saying How dost thou do my sweet Pigsnie? How I do, said the wench, Swine's-face, what do you mean by casting a sheep's eye at me? Oh! sweet Pigsnie have at thee with another. But I defy thee Swine's face, said the wench. What my sweet old Pigsnie, be content, for if you live till next year you will be a foul sow. Walk knave walk said she, for if you live till next year ye will be a fool.

TALE XVII.

There was a man of Gotham who would be married, and when the day of marriage was come they went to church. The Priest said, Do you say

after me. The man said, Do you say after me. The Priest said Say not after me such like, but say what I shall tell you; thou dost play the fool to mock the holy Scripture concerning matrimony. Then the fellow said thou dost play the fool to mock the holy scripture concerning matrimony. The Priest could not tell what to say, but asked, What shall I do with this fool? and the man said, What shall I do with this fool? So the priest took his leave, and would not marry them. But he was instructed by others how to do, and was afterwards married. And thus the breed of the Gothamites has been perpetuated even unto this day.

TALE XVIII.

There was a Scotsman who dwelt at Gotham, and he took a house a little distance from London & turned it into an inn, and for his sign he would have a boar's head. Accordingly he went to a carver, and said,

an you make me a bare head? Yes, aid the carver. Then ſaid he, make ne a bare head and thou'ſe have 20d. or thy hire. I will do it, ſaid the arver. So on St. Andrew's day, be- ore Chriſtmas, the which is called Yule in Scotland, the Scot came to London for his boar's head to ſet up t his door, I ſay to thee, ſpeak, ſaid he Scotſman, haſt thou made me a bare head? Yes, ſaid the carver. He went and brought a man's head of wood that was bare, and ſaid, Sir, here is your bare head. Ay, ſaid the Scot, the meikle deil! is this a bare head? Yes, ſaid the carver I ſay, ſaid he Scot, I will have a bare-head like a head that follows the ſow with gryces. Sir, ſaid the carver, I don't know a ſow and gryces. What, whoreſon, know you not a ſow that will greet and groan & cry a weak, a weak. What, ſaid the carver, do you mean a pig? Yes, ſaid the Scotſman, let me have her head made in timber

and ſet on her ſcalp, and let her ſing whip whire. The carver ſaid he could not. You whoreſon, ſaid, he gar her as ſhe'd ſing, whip whire.

TALE XIX.

In old times during theſe tales, the wives of Gotham were got into an alehouſe, and ſaid, they were all profitable to their husbands. Which way, good goſſips ſaid the ale wife? The firſt ſaid I will tell you all good goſſips; I cannot brew nor bake, therefore I am every day alike; and go to the alehouſe becauſe I cannot go to church and in the alehouſe I pray to God to ſpeed my huſband, & I am ſure my prayers will do him more good than my labour. Then ſaid the ſecond, I am profitable to my husband in ſaving of candle in winter, for I cauſe my huſband and all my people to go to bed by day-light, and riſe by day-light. The third ſaid, I am profitable in ſparing bread, for I drink a gallon of ale, ſo I care not much for meat. The fourth ſaid, I am loth to ſpend meat and drink at home, ſo I go to the tavern at Nottingham and drink wine, and ſuch other things as God ſends me there. The fifth ſaid, a man will ever have more company in another's houſe

da his own, and moſt commonly in the
'e-houſe. The ſixth ſaid, my huſband has
ax and wool to ſpare if I go to other
houſes to do their work. The ſeventh ſaid
ſpare both my huſband's wood & clothes
nd ſit talking all day at other fouks fires.
The eighth ſaid beef, mutton and pork is
lear, I therefore take pigs, chickens, conies
nd capons, being of a leſſ'r price. The
ninth ſaid, I ſpare my huſband's ſoap, for
nſtead of waſhing once a week, I waſh but
nce a quarter. Then ſaid the ale wife, I
eep all my huſband's ale from ſowering;
or as I wont to drink it almoſt up, now I
eave never a drop.

TALE XX.

On Aſh Wedneſday, the miniſter of Go,
ham would have a collection from his pari-
ſhioners, and ſaid unto them, My friends,
the time is come that you muſt uſe prayer,
faſting and alms, but come ye to ſhrift. I
will tell ye more of my mind. But as for
prayer, I don't think that two men in the
pariſh can ſay their Pater-noſter. As for
faſting, ye faſt ſtill, for ye have not a good
meal's meat in the year. As for alms deeds
what ſhould they give that have nothing?
In Lent you muſt refrain from drunkeneſs,

and abſtain from drink. No, not ſo, ſaid one fellow, for it is an old proverb that fiſh ſhould ſwim. Yes, ſaid the prieſt, it muſt ſwim in the water. I crave your mercy, quoth the fellow, I thought it ſhould have ſwam in fine ale, for I have been told ſo. Soon after the men of Gotham came to ſhrift and being ſeven the prieſt knew not what pennance to give. He ſaid, if I enjoin you to pray, you cannot ſay your Paternoſter. And it is but folly to make you faſt becauſe you never eat a meal's meat Labour hard and get a dinner on Sunday, and I will partake of it, another man he enjoined to fare well on Monday, and another on Tuesday, and one after another, that one or other ſhould fare well once in the week, that he might have part of their meat. And as for alms deeds, the prieſt ſaid, ye be but beggars all, except one or two, therefore beſtow your alms on yourſelves.

FINIS.